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SUBJECT: EMBASSY STAFF OPENS DIALOG WITH NEWLY APPOINTED MFA PROTOCOL STAFF

1. (SBU) SUMMARY: Embassy representatives met with newly appointed MFA Protocol and Immunities and Privileges personnel to clarify procedures for expediting Embassy requirements in the areas of approval of Venezuelan visas for TDY and permanently assigned staff, importation of vehicles, credentialing of staff, diplomatic pouch exchanges, issuance of diplomatic license plates and the construction of the new Marine House. Future meetings were agreed upon to continue to clarify any questions the MFA may have that could delay Embassy operations. END SUMMARY

2. (SBU) Consul General Ron Kramer, Management Counselor Cecilia Elizondo Herrera, Facilities Management Officer Nat Marchiano, and Human Resources Officer Eric Anderson met with MFA representatives to discuss a variety of issues. Protocol Director Gregorio Flores and the Director of Immunities and Privileges Gerallynd Gonzalez Graffer met with the Embassy staff to discuss Venezuelan visa issues, importation of eight cylinder armored vehicles, diplomatic license plates, and credentialing of children born in Venezuela to U. S. diplomats.

Emboffs also made a presentation on the plans for the construction of a new Marine House on the Embassy compound. The cordial meeting resulted in the approval of credentials for newborn children, the agreement to continue the diplomatic pouch service procedure now in place, and to allow replacement 8 cylinder armored vehicles to come into the country. Gonzalez was clear that until the MFA files are reconciled with our reports of returned plates they cannot issue any diplomatic plates to the mission.

3. (SBU) The Consul General and the Management Officer will meet with Gonzalez the week of Jan 25 to review visa cases awaiting MFA approval and the issuance of diplomatic license plates. The MFA representatives were clear that they were new and just getting organized and that at times the political climate between the U. S. and Venezuela also interfered with the ability to get things done. This frank admission that the MFA was disorganized and previous assistance from his office had been lacking hopefully seemed to augur well for relations on Management and consular issues. The Consul General requested as much lead time as possible for large groups of Venezuelans traveling to the United States, such as UNGA delegations, to be sure all visas could be issued in a timely fashion, to which Protocol Chief Flores agreed.

4. (SBU) This meeting with the new leadership and the future meetings planned between the Management Counselor and Protocol will offer the opportunity to address some of the annoying problems that have affected our administrative and consular relationships in the recent past. Although the tone in the Embassy's relationship with the Protocol office has improved, it is still not clear if this will result in action to resolve our

administrative issues on a timely basis.  
CAULFIELD